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ABSTRACT

A congress on continuing education and training attended by participants from more than 20 Eastern and Western European countries is summarized in this document. Topics discussed at the plenary sessions, panel discussions, and nine workshops included the following: cooperation between Eastern and Western Europe; the role of the social partners in continuing education and training; continuing education for managers; new objectives and tasks for trainers; employment and training projects for unskilled and semiskilled workers; qualification strategies for women; continuing education at the regional and local level; work, the ecological crisis, and continuing education; cooperation between Eastern and Western companies; and continuing education and training without frontiers. (KC)

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Not aid, cooperation

3rd European Congress on Continuing Education and Training Berlin, 14 - 15 March 1991

On 14 and 15 March 1991 the "European Congress on Continuing Education and Training" was held for the third time in Berlin, this time under the impact of the political and economic changes in Europe.

"Perspectives for Continuing Education and Training - Cooperation between Eastern and Western Europe"

was the subject of the Congress which was attended by almost 2,000 participants from over 20 Eastern and Western European countries. It was accompanied by an Information Fair at which some 100 continuing training institutions presented their work. The Congress was organized by the Berlin Senate Department for Labour and Women's Affairs in cooperation with the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), the Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB) and the European School of Management Studies (EAP), it was supported by the EC Commission.

The Congress had the exceptional merit of uniting the highest and most renowned representatives of politics, practice and research in the field of continuing education and training. Ministers responsible for vocational training from several Eastern and Western European countries came to Berlin including Mr. Marc Fischbach, the Luxembourg Minister of Education and acting President of the EC Council of Ministers, Mr. Igor P. Smirnov, Vice-President of the State Committee for National Education of the USSR, Mr. Rainer Ortleb, Federal Minister for Education and Science in Germany, and Mr. Petr Miller, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs in the CSFR.

The Congress was inaugurated by Mrs. Vasso Papandreou, the member of the EC Commission responsible for vocational training, and Mr. Johannes Peters, Vice-President of the European Parliament.

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But the 3rd European Congress on Continuing Education and Training was by no means an event just for the political leaders. On the contrary. It was mainly addressed to experts and practitioners from industrial companies and continuing education institutions and to representatives of employers' and employees' organizations. This Congress provided the very first opportunity of getting many experts from the EC Member States and from Eastern and Central Europe to meet at a "round table". In the plenary sessions, panel discussions and nine workshops problems were presented, possible solutions were outlined and new and creative initiatives for the qualification of workers in Eastern and Western Europe were discussed.

A part of Utopia come true

When, in October 1988, at the end of the 2nd European Congress on Continuing Education and Training, the question of "Cooperation between Eastern and Western Europe" was suggested by CEDEFOP as the subject of the Congress this year, no one could have even remotely imagined the political conditions under which this 3rd European Congress on Continuing Education and Training would be held. The catchword at that time was the "Internal Market" and it was considered to be the only great challenge facing continuing education and training. Since then radical changes have occurred in Europe. In Central and Eastern Europe a profound urge for democracy and freedom has had a fundamental impact on the political and economic structures. From the very beginning the European Community expressed its intention of helping these countries to stabilize their resurgent democracy and to ameliorate their ruined economies through investments.

Investment in an economy does not only mean the supply of modern production equipment and the construction of new production facilities, it also means investment in human capital. Men and women must be trained to use the new technologies, to supply modern services and to take economic decisions which are geared to future requirements. On the one hand, vocational qualification is an essential pre-condition for the anticipated increase of production and the expected economic expansion of a country. On the other hand, it represents the assets which men and women can contribute themselves to secure their means of living and to improve the quality of life. Without education and training, as Minister Marc Fischbach from Luxembourg, acting President of the EC Council of Ministers said, a human being is not in a position to come to terms with himself, and without this

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inner peace all other forms of peace are futile. Continuing education as a link between Eastern and Western European countries, said Christine Bergmann, Mayor in Berlin, is a part of Utopia come true, especially when the different social systems learn from their cultural and social values how to approach one another without violating the sensibilities of the other.

The aid given by the Western European states should not be confined to the mere supply of goods. There are and can be no intentions of dictating what the Central and Eastern European countries should do on their way back to Europe, to democracy and a market economy. This was already emphasized by Jacques Delors last year. Continuing in this spirit, Mrs. Vasso Papandreou, inaugurating the Congress, stressed that the idea was not to give good advice as if we know everything to be known much better than these countries. The aim was to give as much assistance as possible.

Assistance certainly, but how

No answer was found in the Congress discussions to the question of what concrete shape this support for Central and Eastern Europe could take. The initial situations are too divergent, the problems too numerous, and knowledge of one another still too inadequate to have enabled the nine workshops in the Congress to work out directly applicable solutions. Even though the 300 experts from Central and Eastern Europe expressed the urgent need for assistance from the West, it was clear that the mere imitation of Western European continuing training patterns was not a feasible approach. At the same time, these discussions also made the Western European participants more aware of the shortcomings and limitations of their own systems.

The following sections are based on the reports of the nine workshops. As they have to be brief, they cannot present a complete picture of the deliberations, but they do describe the leading issues and show the atmosphere in which the discussions took place.

The role of the social partners in continuing education and training

Employers and employees should participate with equal rights in the definition of the goals and content of vocational training and continuing training. This participation of the social partners is acknowledged in

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all Western European states and corresponds to the understanding of democracy in our society. However, the forms of participation still vary greatly in the individual EC Member States. If the pre-conditions for the implementation of decisions do not exist, there is a danger that this will remain a pure ritual. Many different agencies and institutions must first of all be equipped with the necessary instruments and research and operational resources. Social dialogue has been established in the field of continuing vocational training but there is still room for improvement at the enterprise level. Western Europe can give the countries of Central and Eastern Europe "help for self-help" only through the establishment of a democratic economic order and educational systems which are committed to democracy. None of this can be achieved without the active participation of the social partners. In this context cooperation cannot mean the imposition of one's own models. The call is not "Go West" but "Go East"! There is a need here to have greater accessibility and a broader expansion of existing EC educational programmes (LINGUA, COMETT, PETRA, FORCE, PHARE, TEMPUS, and others).

Continuing education and training for managers

The Central and Eastern European countries are trying, almost with brute force, to change from a centrally-planned economic system to the principles of a market economy. However much he would like to go to bed one evening and wake up the next morning in a market economy, said the Soviet Minister, Mr. Smirnov, in a Congress press conference, this was nothing but a dream. A market economy cannot simply be decreed or acquired immediately. The problems of conversion to a market-oriented management are too complex to be solved more or less overnight by the industrial companies. What is involved is not only a lack of understanding of simple technical terms and concepts (accounting, fiscal law, foreign trade, financing, etc.), but also the lack of knowledge of market processes and of the importance of own initiative and how it should be handled. An improvement of the management situation under these conditions requires, even more than in Western Europe, a high level of motivation in the managers of Eastern Europe. Very often, this does not correspond to a willingness to learn because many managers are not aware of gaps in their knowledge and the nature of these gaps.

There is little point in transplanting management training which has been successful in Western Europe or the USA. The qualification needs of the Eastern European

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managers are of a different nature. "No development aid", said the experts from Eastern Europe, because this would mean a "descent to the level of developing countries". They were looking for partners with whose assistance they could solve their own problems. In this connection it would be very useful to take concrete cases from the management of Eastern European companies for use in management training. The use of exemplary "joint venture cases" as examples of continuing management training would be of great value.

New objectives and tasks for trainers

Vocational training of a high standard requires qualified trainers and continuing education trainers. They play an especially important role in the establishment and expansion of educational systems. They are the pioneers and multipliers whose work will have a decisive effect on the future of educational systems in East and West. Now that training and continuing training can no longer be confined to the teaching of technical expertise and technical skills, the roles of the trainer and the continuing education trainer also change. They can no longer just demonstrate the actions which the trainee has to learn, they must be a credible example themselves in the training process of the patterns of behaviour and skills they are trying to teach the trainees. Training for occupations in a society oriented to the principles of market economy can only be given by persons who have been trained for and have personal experience of this economy. Therefore, the main requirement at present is to qualify training and continuing training staff for this change in Europe.

Employment and training projects for unskilled and semi-skilled workers

There are some groups of employees who up to now have been neglected by the continuing training systems in the European Community, namely, the unskilled and semi-skilled workers. However, a change of consciousness is emerging. Because of the growing demand for skilled workers, the unskilled and semi-skilled workers are also being recognized as a potential source of qualified manpower. Successful continuing training concepts for these groups will have to be based on independent working and learning, participation and autonomy.

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The situation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is quite different. The difficulties to be overcome are not only those of modernizing the economy, they stem from a radical alteration of the system which each worker is experiencing as a profound economic and psychological crisis. Metaphorically speaking, society will have to be turned upside down to get the people back on their feet. The role of continuing training in this process has still not been clarified. In the Central and Eastern European states an attempt is being made to build up continuing training systems without the existence of a functioning market which can serve to indicate the goals and the tasks of continuing training. Continuing training should show the workers the road to be followed into the future, but it runs the risk of becoming a substitute system for employment. A Congress participant put this very aptly: "Our situation is completely different to yours. We do not even know whether we should train engineers or hairdressers."

Under these circumstance continuing training concepts stressing group learning, in-company training, own initiative and autonomy will, in the eyes of the Central and Eastern Europeans, either appear to be the jaded Utopias of yesteryear or the unreal dreams of the future. Mutual learning and cooperation require a much more detailed knowledge of conditions on the other side.

Qualification strategies for women

For the first time in a European Congress on Continuing Education and Training the subject of qualification strategies for women at work and for the reintegration of women into working life, was explicitly selected as a working theme and dealt with in a workshop. The women representatives from East and West agreed that this transnational exchange should be institutionalized and given some form of continuity. A single workshop dealing with subjects specifically related to women is not enough, especially when, as in this Congress too, men alone determine what goes on in the other workshops and plenary sessions. The views and the experience of women have to become an integral part of the entire process of international congresses because women represent one-half of humanity.

There is a danger that an attempt will be made to solve the economic and social problems in Central and Eastern Europe at the cost of women's jobs. Women are being displaced on the labour market, they are being pushed into less-qualified jobs and the training they receive is

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totally inadequate. This process has to be stopped both in the East and the West. It is necessary to develop schemes and strategies which will give women the opportunity to participate equally in training and qualification processes and equal opportunities on the labour market. This development has to be encouraged at the different levels. Furthermore, Community resources should be distributed in such a way that work projects for women are also equally supported. The imbalance in the ratio of men to women on the labour market should not be viewed as the specific problem of a "marginal group", it is a problem affecting society as a whole and has to be solved by men and women together.

Continuing education at regional and local level

The quality of an educational system can be judged by the way in which it treats the weakest members of the system. Continuing education and training in Europe should be available even in regions in which living conditions are characterized by deprivation and neglect. Here, joint efforts by the people living there and the associations and institutions working in that area are required. Work is only one aspect of the project "life" which has to be given a new shape. Therefore, the contents and objectives of continuing education and training cannot be prescribed by a central body. The autonomy of the individual and the region should be respected. Continuing education and training is a process for mobilizing regional and human resources.

If continuing education and training are organized on the "free market" many interested persons will have no chance of getting it. Women and migrant workers belong to these disadvantaged groups in the regions and municipalities. Up to now the EC has not been energetic in promoting their interests. In every region there are also other persons who are excluded from continuing education facilities. Special efforts have to be made on their behalf because their interests are often masked.

At regional and municipal level cooperation and exchange in planning and continuing training are as indispensable as respect for autonomy. Regions, towns and rural municipalities with similar problems all wish to have exchange projects, also with partners over large distances; all of them are interested in mutual visits. However, if cooperation with Western European partners is to be facilitated, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe will require assistance in setting up language courses.

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Work, ecological crisis, continuing education

In the last twenty years continuing education and training played a decisive role in helping to overcome structural problems, especially in the highly industrialized countries. A number of employees affected by the re-structuring of industries, rationalization and specialization could find jobs in new areas through continuing training and re-training. Compared to these difficulties, the problems arising from the ecological crisis today are putting a much greater strain on the employment system. Although much thought is now being given to the environmental crisis, this has not had much impact on the structure of continuing training in the companies.

Almost all sectors of the economy are confronted with new (ecological) demands which will entail differing degrees of change in existing production processes and services. Awareness of ecological problems is growing and there is a rising demand for measures to protect the environment. Existing occupations are being broadened to include environmental protection qualifications and in individual cases, new occupations are even emerging. However, it is still an open question whether all this will suffice to master the crisis.

If the issue at stake is not only remedial measures to repair the damaged environment, but measures to save it from new damage, then the traditional forms of continuing education and training no longer suffice. If destruction of the environment is remedied with technical measures alone, there is a danger that people will think that the problem has been solved, as if, for instance, the installation of a device to filter flue gas suffices to solve the real environmental problem. It is also not enough to give people in certain occupations environmental expertise. There is an urgent need for a change in the patterns of behaviour of all members of society. Here, a completely new system (or rather "non-system") of continuing education with new teaching structures (not linked to certificates) could assume this altered task. Television, video and citizens' initiatives have shown for some years now that learning can take place in different ways and can also be fun.

East-West company cooperation or "How to learn market economy"

The development of East-West company cooperation is proceeding at a breath-taking pace at present. There are

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probably some hundreds of cooperation agreements between Western European firms and Central and Eastern European partners, and more are being signed every day. This cooperation ranges from joint ventures to the establishment of new industries. There is virtually no country which is not involved in one way or another.

The Western companies are faced with the difficulty that their Central and Eastern European partners operate in economic areas which are still oriented to central planning or are just taking the first steps towards a market economy. The staff in these companies, above all the management team, are faced with completely new demands. But how can Western principles of management be transposed to state-controlled centrally-planned economies? How can internal reforms be introduced against external barriers? Continuing education can certainly not confine itself to teaching only the technical skills of management and business administration.

The "ideal businessman" in a market economy has some specific characteristics: creativity, ability to introduce innovations, ability to get his ideas accepted, willingness to take risks, etc. All this is required to make up a "true" entrepreneur. But how can such key qualifications be acquired or taught? Even in the West there is no agreement on this. The only certainty is that entrepreneurial skills and market-economy-oriented action cannot be taught in seminars and courses alone. This applies even more so to Central and Eastern Europe.

What happens to people when the orientations and value concepts which they have acquired over decades, suddenly no longer seem to be valid? What achievements - not only economic - are they capable of and how will they cope with a social order whose central values are so different to the ones which prevailed up to then? If continuing vocational training is not to be reduced to the mere acquisition of formal qualifications, the human being will have to be viewed in his overall life situation. Therefore, consideration of this life situation is one of the pre-conditions for the development of adequate qualification schemes.

New structures, whether in the company or in society as a whole, must grow gradually, they must mature within the human being and be mentally integrated. They cannot just be "transplanted". This makes it clear that continuing education and training programmes for the Central and Eastern European countries are long-term and broad-based propositions. There is no quick and easy way of achieving this.

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Continuing education and training without frontiers...

Anyone who tries, from Central and Eastern Europe, to follow developments in Western educational technologies, will be astounded: DELTA, COMETT, EUROPACE, SATURN, OLYMPUS, EUROSTEP, INTERMAPS - just to mention a few of the "high tech acronyms" whose content is a mystery to the non-initiated even in Western Europe. They represent EC research and development programmes, education technology projects, communication satellites, open learning systems, and they show the present development level of new technological learning. As in the West, the computer has long found its way into Central and Eastern European schools and classrooms, not however as a medium of education technology to improve learning efficiency, but as an essential piece of equipment, as a "tool" for future occupational activities. There was no electronics industry to discover a new and promising market in continuing education and training with the result that there is a technological, i.e. "instrumental" lag behind the West.

The situation is quite different in the field of distance learning which still uses "traditional" media (apprenticeship certificate, etc.). Here the Central and Eastern European countries have a rich reservoir of experience. Both elements must be united, Western educational technology and Eastern distance learning systems, to meet the tremendous demand for qualification as quickly and as inexpensively as possible. Cooperation means mutual advantage. At the 3rd European Congress on Continuing Education and Training, however, the educational technologists from the West were alone. Their colleagues from the East, if any, could not attend. Thus it was not surprising that the results of the discussion in this workshop were not any different from the results of other meetings and only repeated recommendations which had already been repeated elsewhere: More research! More cooperation!

Hang the wagon on the moving train

"The European Community train is on the move. We have to try and couple a large number of wagons on to this train. Normally, the train would be halted for this operation. But we are trying to do this while it is in motion and are even accelerating the train in the process. This operation produces a sense of anxiety, perplexity, sometimes hectic activity or, even worse, the courage of the desperate. At the same time everyone is trying to conceal these emotions."

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This is how Hans Joachim Rieseberg, one of the rapporteurs, described the current problems in Europe, and they emerged in the same form in the Congress.

The 3rd European Congress on Continuing Education and Training - a two-day mammoth meeting with almost 2,000 participants, more than 300 from the countries of the former Eastern European block, a Congress with almost 100 speakers in working groups with extremely diverse subjects and a crowded programme - what was the outcome?

Firstly, the realization that the continuing education and training instruments available in the West are possibly not - to retain the metaphor of the train - suitable for coupling!

The main experience in this Congress was the "wordlessness" of the Central and Eastern European participants and the "helplessness" of the experts from the West. Western European educational experts know each other by first name, they meet regularly, speak different tongues but still the same language, have eloquent turns of phrase and show what is going on in the Western world. But, the mere knowledge of what is going on in the West does not help a manager from the East. The realization that urgently needed advice is not forthcoming leads to a feeling of insecurity. So does the inability to give this advice, despite all expectations. For the first time in a "Manager Congress", said the Chairman of a workshop, did he hear the word "fear" used so often by both sides. Fear of what is going to happen, fear of change which will effect not only one part of Europe. For this reason continuing education and training in the European Community should be critically examined to see whether it is capable of coping with the present changes in Europe.

The 3rd European Congress on Continuing Education and Training was not an East-West event. It was an EC-Congress with a large participation from Central and Eastern Europe. Perhaps its most important outcome was the atmosphere which reigned. A Czech participant expressed this very eloquently in a brief statement at the end of the Congress. He did not come to Berlin, he said, in the hope of finding financial donors who would help him to finance all the urgent reforms in his country. No, no one could promise financial aid. But still he was not returning home empty-handed. What he had experienced at the Congress in Berlin was the manifestation of solidarity and partnership between all the participants from East and West, and this was as important as any form of material assistance.

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The wish was expressed that a future Congress should move towards Central and Eastern Europe in order to have more communication with the actors there. Thus the idea was born to organize a "EURO TRAIN FOR TRAINING" BERLIN - WARSZAWA - PRAHA - BUDAPEST - WIEN, an idea which was spontaneously welcomed in the final panel discussion and the subsequent meeting of CEDEFOP experts (on 16 March 1991). This new and very complex form of European encounter is being examined at present by the responsible bodies in Berlin and Brussels and is also being studied in the other European cities mentioned. There is good reason to hope that the 4th European Congress on Continuing Education and Training will be held in autumn 1992 in a new form.

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